

Jihad Dib

Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Youth Justice



Media Release

Beachgoers even safer with eyes in the sky

Monday, 26 February 2024

Editor's note: Footage available [here](#).

NSW emergency services are working together to help keep the state's northern coastline safer, with the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and Surf Life Saving NSW (SLSNSW) teaming up to introduce aerial patrols of busy local beaches using the RFS Bell helicopter.

Volunteer lifesavers will soon have a birds'-eye-view of rips and dangerous surf conditions, isolated swimmers, and other threats such as sharks on busy days along a 100-kilometre stretch of coastline from Red Rock down to South West Rocks.

Information gathered through aerial surveillance can be relayed to the SLSNSW State Operations Centre and individual beach patrols, giving ground crews advance warning of threats, and helping them respond to emergencies more effectively.

Aerial patrols can also be used for search operations, directing water-based rescue personnel to a specific location, or even to undertake a rescue if necessary.

The Bell helicopter is equipped with a sophisticated video and Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) camera operated by RFS aircrew to provide live stream video, capture still images and map the location of any identified hazards.

The use of the Bell helicopter by SLSNSW volunteers will be dependent on weather and RFS operational needs, with the chopper to be controlled by professional aviation crew.

Aerial patrols are set to start from 24 February and will run two times a day from Coffs Harbour on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays during the warmer months.

Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib said:

"One of my priorities as Minister is interoperability, and this partnership between the RFS and SLSNSW is a great example of emergency services agencies working together and sharing resources for the benefit of public safety."

"Aerial surveillance is incredibly useful for beach safety, and as more people get to the coastline on a warm day our SLSNSW volunteers are in an even better position to help people if they get into trouble."

SLSNSW CEO Steven Pearce said:

"The aerial patrols will provide a new and unparalleled vantage point, allowing us to swiftly identify and address potential dangers and respond effectively to coastal emergencies."

"With the recent number of drownings in NSW, it's more important than ever to utilise every available means to enhance beach safety and we are thrilled to collaborate with the RFS in this way."

Commissioner of the RFS Rob Rogers said:

"Our collaboration with Surf Life Saving NSW marks a crucial step forward in leveraging our resources for the greater good."

"From fires to floods and now beach safety, the RFS aviation fleet and crew are trained and positioned to assist and protect the people of NSW wherever and whenever possible."

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